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## REPORT TO TRANSPORTATION COMMITTEE MEETING OF WEDNESDAY, MAY 27, 2026

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**SUBJECT**     **Aligning Regional Transportation and Growth Planning**

### **ISSUE SUMMARY**

To highlight the inter-related nature of regional transportation and growth planning, and to provide context arising from ongoing regional transportation planning work in advance of forthcoming consideration of a potential update to the Capital Regional District's (CRD) Regional Growth Strategy (RGS).

### **BACKGROUND**

The CRD's 2018 RGS and 2014 Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) together establish the long-term framework for where growth occurs and how people and goods move across the region.

Since adoption of both plans, the region has experienced significant change. Population growth, housing demand, travel patterns, climate commitments, reconciliation initiatives, infrastructure investment priorities, and provincial policy direction have evolved more rapidly than anticipated, increasingly highlighting the interconnected nature of regional growth and transportation planning.

As outlined in a prior staff report presented to the Transportation Committee in March 2026, ongoing work on regional transportation priorities, governance, and the RTP has identified growing pressure on transportation systems, the need for stronger regional coordination, and the limitations of addressing transportation challenges independently from land use and growth planning. Early findings from the RTP update reinforce the importance of aligning transportation investments with long-term growth patterns to support regional objectives related to mobility, affordability, climate action, and equity.

In parallel, the CRD has supported the Reconciliation Corridor Initiative (RCI), a First Nations-led partnership involving the Esquimalt (Kosapsun) Nation and Songhees Nation, the CRD and local governments to explore the future of the Island Rail Corridor (IRC) within the capital region. While the initiative remains in the preliminary planning stages and does not pre-determine outcomes, it illustrates how emerging regional transportation initiatives may have implications for long-term growth patterns, land use planning, and transit-supportive development. The scope of the RTP planning process has been updated to consider the role of the RCI within the regional context.

Separately, the CRD Board has previously directed staff to report back on the potential need to update the RGS. This has included the completion of a Growth and Mobility Study that has underscored the inter-related nature of regional transportation and growth planning and supports the need for alignment. A staff report responding to that direction and the outcomes is scheduled for consideration in June 2026, making it timely to share context arising from ongoing regional transportation planning work in advance of that discussion.

### **Transportation and Growth as a Connected System**

Transportation systems and land use patterns function as an integrated system. Decisions about where and how communities grow directly influence travel demand, infrastructure costs, mode choice, transportation-related emissions, and accessibility. Transportation investments, in turn, shape development patterns, housing feasibility, and economic and social outcomes.

Early findings from the RTP update are reinforcing several system-level observations:

- Rapid growth has increased pressure on regional transportation systems, particularly in key corridors and growing communities.
- Travel time performance is closely tied to land use patterns, including density, mix of uses, and proximity to employment and services.
- Transit, rapid transit, and active transportation investments are most effective when aligned with growth patterns.
- Fragmented or misaligned planning increases long-term costs and risks, including congestion, affordability challenges, and difficulty meeting climate and safety objectives.

Despite 2024 provincial legislation (Bill 47 - Transit Oriented Areas, and Bill 44 - Small-Scale Multi-Unit Housing) strengthening land use and transportation integration, municipalities continue to advance their own development policies, leading to inconsistent regional outcomes. The RTP update identifies this as a key area where stronger regional direction and coordination of local plans within a unified regional mobility framework could significantly improve alignment and outcomes.

### **Relevance to Regional Growth Strategy Discussion**

As work on the RTP update progresses, it is increasingly clear that many transportation outcomes in the region are shaped by long-term regional growth patterns and land use decisions that sit beyond the scope of transportation planning alone. Understanding—and potentially addressing—these issues require consideration of regional growth policy alongside transportation strategy.

Emerging work under the RTP update demonstrates that growth patterns directly influence travel demand, trip lengths, mode choice, infrastructure costs, and transportation related emissions. Dispersed or auto oriented growth increases reliance on longer vehicle trips and places sustained pressure on the road network, while more compact, mixed-use, and transit supportive development patterns improve the performance and cost-effectiveness of transit and active transportation investments.

Several consistent observations from the RTP update illustrate this relationship:

- Travel time performance is strongly influenced by land use patterns, particularly density, mix of uses, and proximity to employment and services;
- Transit, rapid transit, and active transportation investments are most effective where growth is planned and delivered together, and in supportive locations; and
- Many of the challenges related to congestion, affordability, and transportation reliability reflect cumulative land use decisions over time rather than isolated transportation system shortcomings.

The RTP update is helping to clarify both the strategic role transportation can play in supporting regional objectives and the limits of transportation-based infrastructure on its own. Addressing issues such as congestion management, affordability, climate action, safety, and equitable access increasingly depends on coordinated consideration of growth patterns alongside transportation planning and investment.

Taken together, the evolving RTP work provides important context for broader regional discussions about long-term growth, infrastructure coordination, and policy alignment across multiple areas of regional responsibility. With an updated RTP anticipated for Board consideration in 2027, its outcomes will be in place to guide and align growth considerations within a future RGS update.

## **ALTERNATIVES**

### *Alternative 1*

That the Transportation Committee recommend to the Capital Regional District Board:

1. That the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) project team provide an update to the Planning and Protective Services Committee on how the ongoing RTP update relates to regional growth planning and land use integration, for context and consideration of a potential update to the Regional Growth Strategy; and
2. That this report be referred to the Planning and Protective Services Committee for information.

### *Alternative 2*

That this report be referred back to staff for additional information based on Transportation Committee direction.

## **IMPLICATIONS**

### *Alignment with Board & Corporate Priorities*

This report is consistent with CRD Board Strategic Priorities and the 2023–2026 Corporate Plan by emphasizing integrated, long-term planning approaches that support regional mobility, climate action, housing affordability, reconciliation, and coordinated infrastructure investment.

### *Alignment with Existing Plans & Strategies*

The report highlights the inter-relationship between the RTP, the RGS, and emerging regional initiatives. As regional conditions and policy environments evolve, maintaining alignment between long-range transportation planning and growth policy is increasingly important to support effective implementation and avoid unintended long-term impacts.

### *Reconciliation and Indigenous Relations Implications*

The RCI reflects a reconciliation-based approach to regional transportation planning led by the Lekwungen Nations. While no decisions are implied or required through this report, the initiative underscores the importance of respecting Indigenous leadership, rights, and interests in future regional transportation and growth-related discussions. Concurrently with the RCI, the CRD has been engaging with First Nations regarding the ongoing RTP update and will seek to do so through a future RGS update.

*Governance and Interdepartmental Coordination*

This report supports coordinated governance across CRD services and committees by reinforcing the need for alignment between transportation planning, regional growth policy, and broader regional objectives. Providing shared context enables informed sequencing of policy discussions without predetermining outcomes.

*Service Delivery Implications*

Stronger integration between transportation planning and growth considerations supports more effective delivery of regional transportation services, including transit, active transportation, and transportation demand management initiatives, by aligning investment with long-term demand patterns.

*Environmental and Climate Implications*

Transportation and land use alignment is critical to reducing transportation-related greenhouse gas emissions and supporting regional climate objectives. Compact, transit-supportive growth patterns improve the effectiveness of sustainable transportation investments.

*Housing and Affordability Implications*

Transportation access and housing feasibility are closely linked. Coordinated planning can help reduce combined housing and transportation costs for residents, particularly in growing communities.

*Social Equity and Accessibility Implications*

Aligning growth with transportation investment improves access to employment, services, and education, and supports more equitable mobility outcomes across the region.

**CONCLUSION**

The ongoing Regional Transportation Plan update confirms that transportation outcomes are inseparable from regional growth patterns and land use decisions. The observations and emerging findings summarized in this report provide timely context that can help inform broader regional discussions about long-term growth, infrastructure coordination, and policy alignment in advance of consideration of a potential update to the RGS.

**RECOMMENDATION**

That the Transportation Committee recommend to the Capital Regional District Board:

1. That the Regional Transportation Plan (RTP) project team provide an update to the Planning and Protective Services Committee on how the ongoing RTP update relates to regional growth planning and land use integration, for context and consideration of a potential update to the Regional Growth Strategy; and
2. That this report be referred to the Planning and Protective Services Committee for information.

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